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ABSTRACT

A small pilot study involving eight parents tested an objective inventory, the Parenting Stress Index (PSI), for evaluating parental education classes. The classes, called The Parenting Skills Groups, were intended to provide a theoretical background of parenting concepts rather than a collection of specific techniques. The course was divided into ten topics taught in eight sessions: introduction; implications of parenthood; parenting myths; developmental stages; parental role; modeling; sexuality; nurturance; discipline; and conclusion. The PSI, a self-report instrument designed primarily for identifying parent/child relationships which are under stress or at risk, was handed out to parents at the first and last class sessions of the course. Results indicated changes between pretest and posttest scores: three out of the eight scores showed a drop in parental stress levels after the course, while five out of the eight scores showed a slight increase in parental stress. Interviews with these parents suggested that some changes, particularly in attitude, had occurred; but significant changes in parental actions and skills had not. Some parents suggested that their stress levels had slightly increased because they were dissatisfied with their old parenting habits, but had not yet been able to make or stabilize changes in parenting. The data seemed to indicate that the course might be more satisfactory if it included more detailed or specific information about problem solving or provided follow-up courses. Appendices explain how the PSI was scored, present a comparison of PSI scores, provide questionnaire results and transcripts of interviews with various clients. (DST)

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November 25, 1983

ONE WAY TO MEET FAMILY NEEDS:

A Pilot Study of Effects of Parenting Classes at a Fairbanks Agency

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One Way to Meet Family Needs: A Descriptive Pilot-Study of the Effect of Parenting Classes

BACKGROUND ON PARENT EDUCATION

In recent years, community programs for families have been created, developed, and organized. One type of program that is becoming very popular is the offering of classes in parenting skills. Education for parenthood is often called "family life education" (FLE).

In 1974, the Family Service Association of America (FSAA) adopted a recommendation to make family life education a coequal program element. Family life education is generally offered through family service agencies, but also through schools, churches, and other youth and adult organizations. It is basically an educational service, founded on the belief that knowledge and understanding gained in a supportive context can effectively contribute to improved self-esteem and improved parenting skills. This service is "targeted at people who are self-directing and enter voluntarily even though they may or may not be experiencing pain or conflict" (Kahn & Kamerman, 1980, p. 146).

Other examples of community parent education programs include Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP), Communication and Parenting Skills (CAPS), and Parent Effectiveness Training (PET). The goals of most such programs include reducing parent-child conflict, fostering positive comnmunication and relationships, and facilitating responsible maturation (Turner, 1980). Turner concludes that parenting courses are "designed to supplement, rather than replace, the parenthood training that all young persons should, but unfortunately do not, receive at home."

In Fairbanks, Alaska, a similiar type of program is offered by a growing number of public social agencies and some private organizations in the city. The program in Fairbanks is called "Parenting Skills Groups" (PSG), or, simply, "parenting classes."

PURPOSE AND METHODS OF STUDY

The purpose of this study was to examine a means of evaluation of the Parenting Skills Groups in Fairbanks. A small pilot study was devised to test the use of an objective inventory--the Parenting Stress Index (PSI). It was hypothesized that parents would show a change in PSI scores after participating in a Parent Skills Group offered through the Resource Center for Parents and Children (RCPC) in Fairbanks. Two other methods were used to check parent responses to the Parent Skills Group, and also to determine accuracy of PSI scores: each parent filled out a questionnaire following the

course, and each parent was personally interviewed by myself, the graduate student in charge of the study.

Sample

The sample consisted of 8 parents from two Parent Skills Groups offered at two different times through the Resource Center for Parents and Children (RCPC). The first group was offered in March and April, 1983: originally consisting of 9 parents, but dropping to 3 parents (1 male, 2 female) when 6 people (3 married couples) moved out of the Fairbanks area and thus had to drop the course. The second group was offered in July and August, 1983: consisting of 6 parents (all female) who completed the course. Only 5 parents from this group are included in this study, however, since one parent could not reached to turn in her PSI posttest. In summary:

1st course: 3 parents
2nd course: 5 parents Total sample: 8 parents

One of the primary weaknesses of this study is its small sample size. However, our main purpose was to provide some pilot information that would be useful in designing another, larger, study. Even though conclusions cannot be drawn regarding parenting classes from this pilot study, there was some useful and interesting information gained that will be of help in designing a study for the future.

The Parent Skills Group: Curriculum, Format, and Facilitators

Both Parent Skills Groups were based on a parenting

curriculum developed for the HEW Region X Office Child Development, as part of The National Center for Child Abuse and Neglect Training and Technical Assistance Program. The curriculum, titled "Everyone Needs a Parent," is divided into 10 units, which were taught in 8 sessions:

Introduction
Implications of Parenthood
Parenting Myths
Developmental Stages
The Parental Role
Modeling
Sexuality
Nurturance
Discipline
Bringing It All Together

Through facilitator experience, the curriculum was modified slightly and supplemented with other pertinent activities, films, and many handouts, including some from the National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse and from the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, as well as other sources.

The course was intended to be a theoretical background of parenting concepts, rather than a collection of specific techniques. Group activities and group discussions provided the basis for dissemination of information, and discussion of feelings. Each group had two facilitators: one of the facilitators was a counselor at RCPC, and facilitated for both groups:

1st group: RCPC counselor;
Counselor from another agency who volunteered to help facilitate the course.
2nd group: RCPC counselor (same as Group 1);
Graduate student in charge of this study who volunteered to help facilitate the course.

All three facilitators had previously participated in a three-day

intensive parent-skills training session; all three facilitators were female, married, and between the ages of 28 and 38.

Methods of Data Collection

Parenting Stress Indexes (PSI's) were handed out to parents at the beginning class, and again at the last class session. In addition, parents were given a course evaluation questionnaire (designed by the RCPC counselor/facilitator) at the completion of the course. Each parent was interviewed following the completion of the course. (The three parents from Group 1 were actually interviewed several months after the completion of their course.) At this interview, questions were asked if/what changes had occurred in parental attitudes, skills, and stress levels as a result of taking the Parenting Skills Group. Information gained in the interviews was used to help confirm validity of the PSI scores.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE PARENTING STRESS INDEX (PSI)

The Parenting Stress Index was created by Burke & Abidin (1980) as a 150-item self-report instrument designed primarily for identifying parent/child systems which are under stress and at risk. The Index is divided into three major subsets, or domains, which categorize factors causing parental stress as child-related, mother-related, or situational/demographic. A high child domain score is associated with children displaying qualities which make it difficult for parents to fulfill roles. A high mother domain score is associated with stress or potential dysfunction of the parent's functioning. Situational/demographic

scores are designed to objectively report situational and demographic stressors. The total score of 365 (the 85th percentile) or above is considered high, and the parent child relationship is considered to be at risk for the development of dysfunctional parenting behaviors or behavior problems in the child involved. Each domain is further divided into several to many subdomains. The subdomains are described more fully in Appendix A, "Scoring the PSI."

The items used in the PSI were developed after an extensive review of the clinical and research literature of stress measurement, child development, psychopathology, child-rearing, and personality measurement; resulting in 95 percent of the items being directly related to specific research findings suggesting that a given variable was related to stress in the parent-child system (Abidin, 1979). The instrument was normed on a sample of 540 mothers of children between the ages of 1 mo. and 10 years, with 60 percent of the sample below three years of age. Subsequent tests and retests replicated and confirmed the results of the original study. An extensive discussion of the original and subsequent studies is outlined in Abidin's "A Review of the Research" (1979) and "Research Update" (1981). Further explanations on the origin, research background, and implications of the PSI, can be found in Burke and Abidin's article in the Parent Education and Intervention Handbook (Burke & Abidin, 1980).

RESULTS

Results of the pilot study can be summarized in three categories: PSI results, questionnaire results, and interview results.

PSI results are summarized, along with demographic information, in Table I. Three of the eight clients had PSI posttest totals that dropped considerably from their pretest scores. Five of the eight clients had posttest scores that were actually higher than the pretest scores, although the difference was small, ranging from 8 to 32 points. This was certainly unexpected, suggesting that attending a Parent Skills Group might actually raise a client's stress levels. Questions in the interviews were designed to confirm or deny the apparent raise in parenting stress levels. Individual subdomain scores were tabulated to see if any patterns would emerge. No patterns appeared; each client seemed to react on a very individual basis to the test subscores. The subdomain scores are included in Appendix B for informational/interest purposes.

Questionnaire results rated the PSG course, including facilitators and content, very positively. The unit on discipline was rated the highest, with modeling, nurturing, and child development units tying as second choice. Four respondents felt that the child development unit was least helpful. Seven of eight respondents listed one or more changed opinion or attitude that resulted from the PSG course. Three respondents still felt uncomfortable with discipline. There were 17 suggestions for

TABLE I

CLIENT INFORMATION

CLIENT	SEX	AGE	RACE	MARITAL STATUS	NO. OF CHILDREN	PSI PRETEST SCORE	PSI POSTTEST SCORE	DIFFERENCE
1	F	25	Esk.	Sep.	1	385	255	-130
2	F	31	Wh.	Married	1	427	459	+ 32
3	F	37	Wh.	Single	2	362	377	+ 15
4	F	28	Wh.	Married	1	399	425	+ 26
5	F	34	Wh.	Married	2	293	309	+ 16
6	F	34	Wh.	Married	2	380	334	- 46
7	M	30	Wh.	Married	1	449	332	-117
8	F	30	Wh.	Single	1	414	422	+ 8

Sep. = Separated

desired follow-up workshops. Appendix C contains a copy of the questionnaire used in the survey. Appendix D contains a comprehensive summary of questionnaire results.

The interviews provided a broad range of information, and are included in their entirety in Appendix E. All eight of the clients responded very positively when asked about the PSG course and about changes in attitude and in parenting actions since the course. All of the clients agreed with the changes in PSI scores, although one client felt that her total scores were higher than expected because of her tendency to avoid the superlative choices on the index (strongly agree; strongly disagree). Even this client, however, agreed with the slight raise in her posttest scores, and the results in general. The three clients whose posttest scores dropped from prettest scores had very many changes in attitude and skills to relate. Most of the clients whose posttest scores rose communicated changes in attitude, but not in actions. These clients suggested that their attitude changes were causing a dissatisfaction with their current parenting habits, but that they hadn't had time to implement and/or stabilize any parenting changes. Thus they agreed with the slightly higher posttest scores. One client from the first Group, because she was interviewed several months after the completion of her course, stated that the intervening months had given her the time to implement some of the changes she began to desire during the PSG course. This client felt that her PSI scores, if taken several months after the course, would be much lower than her posttest scores (taken immediately following the

course), and would accurately reflect changes which had occurred as a result of the PSG course.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Parenting Stress Index posttest scores showed a change from pretest scores of parents who participated in a Parent Skills Group at the Resource Center for Parents and Children in Fairbanks. Three out of eight scores showed a large difference indicating a drop in parental stress levels for those parents. Interviews with the parents confirmed a lower stress level after the course, and also significant changes in parental attitudes and actions.

Five out of eight scores showed a slight increase in posttest scores, indicating a slight raise in parental stress for those parents. Interviews with these parents suggested that some changes, particularly attitude changes, had occurred; but significant changes in parental actions and skills had not occurred. Some parents suggested that their stress levels had indeed slightly increased because they were no longer satisfied with their old parenting habits, but had not yet been able to make or stabilize changes in parenting.

The interviews tend to confirm the accuracy of PSI measurement of parental stress levels.

Questionnaires given to the same parents show a basic satisfaction with the content and facilitation of the Parent Skills Groups, with a desire for more knowledge, particularly in

the area of discipline. Interviews also suggest that more specific information regarding problem-solving (rather than general principles) would be welcome.

Suggestions for developing a more comprehensive study using the PSI to evaluate PSG effectiveness would include the obvious factors of larger numbers in the sample; and use of a control group, probably drawn from parents on the waiting list for PSG courses. The information drawn from this pilot study suggests that the PSI is an accurate tool of measurement; sensitive to slight changes. There is no information, however, whether or not a parent's mood or immediate situation might not color the results of the PSI. A further suggestion would be to include a third testing of each parent from two to six months following the completion of the PSG course, to see if the additional time would allow for more changes or greater stabilization of knowledge from the course.

Although this sample is too small to draw conclusions regarding the PSG course, the data seems to indicate that the current PSG course might draw more participant satisfaction if it were to include more detailed or specific information regarding problem-solving, or be followed by another course or courses available for specific and/or detailed follow-up.

APPENDIX A: SCORING THE PSI

High Child Domain Scores:
associated w/children displaying qualities which make it difficult for parents to fulfill roles.

Child Adaptability/Plasticity:
Child's inability to adjust to changes.
Acceptability of Child to Mother:
Child is different from parent's expectations.
Child Demandingness/Degree of Bother:
Many demands on parent or dependency on parent.
Child Mood:
Child is depressed or unhappy.
Child Distractibility/Activity:
Child is active, restless, distractible, has short attention span.
Child Reinforces Mother:
Lack of positive responses from child.

High Mother Characteristics Domain Scores:
associated with stress or potential dysfunction of the parent's functioning.

Mother Depression, Unhappy, Guilt:
Significant depression in the parent; includes guilt and/or unhappy feelings related to dissatisfaction.
Mother Attachment:
Either: Lack of emotional closeness to child;
Or: Inability to accurately understand child's feelings or needs.
Restrictions Imposed by Parental Role:
Parent feels restricted in role and/or frustrated in attempt to maintain own identity.
Mother's Sense of Competence:
Parents with high scores tend to be
a) parents with a single child;
b) parents lacking in practical child development knowledge or skills; OR
c) parents who don't find their role reinforcing.
Social Isolation:
Parents who are socially isolated from emotional support systems. (Increased potential for child abuse.)
Realistic Attitude Toward Children:
Parent is lacking in objectivity or emotionally over-invested in child.
Relationship with Husband:
Parent lacks emotional and active support of spouse.

Parental Health:
Poor parental health indicated by high scores.

Situational/Demographic Domain Score:
objectively reportable situational and demographic stressors.

Situational Stress:
Stressors that are characteristics of the socio-economic circumstances of the family (income, size of household, etc.)

Stressful Life Events:
Major common life events requiring adaptation and energy expenditure of the parent.

APPENDIX B: PSI COMPARISON OF SUBSCORES

Parenting Stress Index — Comparison Scores

	Client 1			Client 2			Client 3		
	Pre	Post	DIF	Pre	Post	DIF	Pre	Post	DIF
Child Adapt	23	18	-5	37	39	+2	29	31	+2
Accept Child	18	11	-7	16	16	0	14	15	+1
Child Demand	20	19	-1	35	44	+9	38	36	+2
Child Mood	17	15	-2	13	19	+6	12	13	+1
Child Distr	20	22	+2	30	32	+2	35	30	-5
Child Reinf Mo	22	13	-9	15	18	+3	12	13	+1
Total:Child	120	98	-22	146	168	+22	140	138	-2
Mo Depress	51	25	-26	64	67	+3	39	41	+2
Mo Attach	22	14	-8	18	19	+1	20	21	+1
Restric Role	31	15	-16	34	38	+4	20	26	+6
Sense Comp	39	19	-20	58	61	+3	40	44	+4
Soc Isol	23	8	-15	23	22	-1	17	17	0
Real Attit	16	7	-9	13	13	0	11	13	+2
Relat Spouse	20	17	-3	21	23	+2	14	20	+6
Mo Health	16	17	+1	20	20	0	13	11	-2
Total:Mo	218	122	-96	251	263	+12	174	193	+19
Sit Stress	31	23	-8	28	26	-2	33	31	-2
Life Stress	16	12	-4	2	2	0	15	15	0
Total:Sit	47	35	-12	30	28	-2	48	46	-2
Total Score	385	255	-130	427	459	+32	362	377	+15

Parenting Stress Index — Comparison Scores

	Client 4			Client 5			Client 6		
	Pre	Post	DIF	Pre	Post	DIF	Pre	Post	DIF
Child Adapt	44	46	+2	30	33	+3	32	34	+2
Accept Child	20	18	-2	18	18	0	17	14	-3
Child Demand	37	39	+2	29	29	0	40	33	-7
Child Mood	17	17	0	11	11	0	19	13	-6
Child Distr	32	32	0	27	28	+1	29	24	-5
Child Reinf Mo	8	7	-1	13	13	0	11	12	+1
Total:Child	158	159	+1	128	132	+4	148	130	-18
Mo Depress	47	49	+2	28	32	+4	45	40	-5
Mo Attach	24	23	-1	22	20	-2	28	20	-8
Restric Role	21	23	+2	19	20	+1	29	25	-4
Sense Comp	48	48	0	31	35	+4	45	41	-4
Soc Isol	18	18	0	14	14	0	13	13	0
Real Attit	15	13	-2	12	11	-1	14	10	-4
Relat Spouse	19	22	+3	9	10	+1	18	18	0
Mo Health	17	17	0	11	11	0	12	11	-1
Total:Mo	209	213	+4	146	153	+7	204	178	-26
Sit Stress	25	26	+1	19	24	+5	26	26	0
Life Stress	7	27	+20	0	0	0	2	0	-2
Total:Sit	32	53	+21	19	24	+5	28	26	-2
Total Score	399	425	+26	293	309	+16	380	334	-46

Parenting Stress Index Comparison Scores

	Client 7			Client 8		
	Pre	Post	DIF	Pre	Post	DIF
Child Adapt	38	29	-9	28	22	-6
Accept Child	22	18	-4	14	15	+1
Child Demand	42	29	-13	34	34	0
Child Mood	18	15	-3	11	10	-1
Child Distr	32	23	-9	32	30	-2
Child Reinf Mo	15	13	-2	14	12	-2
Total:Child	167	127	-40	133	123	-10
Mo Depress	60	38	-22	54	56	+2
Mo Attach	29	29	0	26	27	+1
Restric Role	31	17	-14	30	32	+2
Sense Comp	58	37	-21	47	51	+4
Soc Isol	27	10	-17	17	24	+7
Real Attit	13	11	-2	16	17	+1
Relat Spouse	16	11	-5	21	20	-1
Mo Health	13	9	-4	14	16	+2
Total:Mo	247	162	-85	225	243	+18
Sit Stress	28	24	-4	38	38	0
Life Stress	7	19	+12	18	18	0
Total:Sit	35	43	+8	56	56	0
Total Score	449	332	-117	414	422	+8

APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

1. (See client information chart, p. 33)
2. REASON FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE GROUP:
   - -recommended by counselor
   - -improve family life and learn parenting skills
   - -support, reenforce better, more positive approach to parenting.
   - -improve parenting skills
   - -learn how to deal w/newly adopted children
   - -help deal w/6 yr. old in a more positive way
   - -understand daughter's development and own development
   - -feeling overwhelmed as a parent and providing a future
3. All clients attended weekly training.
4. All clients were parents.
5. 6 parents missed one (or part of one) session.
   1 parent missed no sessions.
   1 parent missed three sessions.
6. Group leaders: 1 counselor from RCPC was a group leader for both groups (spring and summer).
   The other group leader for the spring group was a counselor from another agency.
   The other group leader for the summer group was a practicum graduate student.
   All three leaders had attended intensive PSG training workshops.
7. LEADERS DELIVERY OF MATERIAL WAS:
   All clients checked "Very Clear."
8. LEADERS SEEMED PREPARED? All clients answered "yes."
   MATERIAL WAS WELL ORGANIZED? All clients answered "yes."
9. LEADERS PRESENTATION WAS ENTHUSIASTIC?
   All clients answered "yes."
10. DID LEADERS SEEM CONCERNED WITH WHETHER PARTICIPANTS LEARNED THE MATERIALS PRESENTED? All clients answered "yes."
11. WERE YOU ENCOURAGED TO EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS AND OPINIONS?
    7 clients answered "yes." 1 client answered "yes, but a bit rushed."
12. LEADERS STRENGTHS:
    - -parent involvement, encouragement, clarity
    - -genuine, concerned, informed, pleasant, fun
    - -knowledge of material; sensitivity
    - -ability to express ideas and encourage participation; humanness and openness
    - -clear presentation of subject matter; ability to listen

to others' ideas without criticism
-good knowledge of areas presented; very personable and enthusiastic
-energy levels; bright smiles that helped melt away stress and develop understanding

13. LEADERS' WEAKNESSES:
-slow presentation of developmental stages
-sometimes lost momentum

14. SUGGESTIONS TO LEADERS:
-discuss a particular concern when it arises, even if it is coming up in a later unit.
-speed up developmental stage of course.
-start on time.

15. All clients rated CURRICULUM CONTENT as "very useful."

16. MOST HELPFUL UNITS: Discipline (3)
Modeling (2)
Nurturing (2)
Child Development (2)
Sex (1)
Values (1)
Other (Doing things for self) (1)

17. LEAST HELPFUL UNITS: Child Development (4)
Introductory units (1)

18. SUGGESTIONS FOR UNITS:
-have classes specifically for different age groups.
-a more in-depth look at discipline techniques.
-use the "Special Me" warm-up at the end rather than at the beginning of class.
-spend less time on development and more on specific problems and solutions.
-condense developmental units.
-more time for discipline, nurturing, and modeling.

19. MOST HELPFUL MATERIALS:
-all handouts (3)
-handouts on sex education (3)
-discipline handouts (2)
-sexuality film (1)
-warm-up exercises (1)
-handouts on child development (1)

20. TRAINING DEALT WITH AGE SPECIFIC CONCERNS FOR MY CHILDREN?
6 clients answered "yes." 1 client answered "some."

21. TRAINING DEALT WITH YOUR CONCERNS GENERALLY?
6 clients answered "yes." 1 client answered "some."

22. CHANGED OPINIONS OR ATTITUDES:
-not to expect too much from child, and meeting parent needs.

-it's o.k. to do things for yourself; poor parenting cycles don't have to continue; a greater understanding of child behaviors; reevaluate what a child can/cannot be permitted to do.
-a more practical, less uptight attitude toward sex education.
-made me feel I am doing a pretty good job at parenting.
-appreciate difference between discipline and punishment; good alternative ways of dealing with anger; aware of bad parent characteristics I don't want to pass on.
-helped renew beliefs that had faded from daily life.
-much more aware of my child's development; more empathic toward her needs.

23. AREAS STILL UNCOMFORTABLE WITH:
-discipline (3)
-anger, mine and my children's
-touching
-stubbornness and hitting

24. DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE RESOURCES AT RCPC?
5 clients answered "yes." 3 clients answered "some."

25. DESIRED FOLLOW-UP WORKSHOPS:
Discipline and techniques (6)
Adolescence (4)
Resources for Stressed Families (4)
Cross-Cultural Sensitivity (2)
Other [How to help others w/o being an invasion of their privacy] (1)

26. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:
-I would like to have met for additional sessions because I am still unsure of certain subjects.
-I'm grateful that the Resource Center exists. I really appreciated the input. I've been helped over a couple of rough spots. Thanks.
-I enjoyed the class. It really did help me renew myself and my relationship with my kids.
-Great Job!

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEWS

Client 1

Changes due to the course:

Client says she is more aware of things that affect her daughter, and that she understands her daughter better. Her biggest change due to the course is less emotional involvement with her child; more objectivity. She is more able to meet her child's needs. She feels that parenting is easier than before; it is not as stressful to meet her child's needs.

Specific examples: Client thinks more about helping her child understand "why not" when her daughter is not allowed to do something, rather than the client worrying about her daughter's action.

Comments about test headings (growth):

Child Demand: Client feels it is a lot easier to think of her child's needs and also to meet those needs (especially her physical needs). "It is a real big change for me." Example: When her child asks for something, the client responds rather than making excuses.

Child Accept: The client feels her expectations are more realistic than before. The developmental portion ofthe parenting class was especially helpful in the client's understanding and acceptance of physical maturation, and certain skills or abilities which are simply not present earlier. Example: "Kids can't read until their eyes are developed sufficiently."

Child Reinf Mo: Client feels that communication between her and her child has improved. Positive responses have also improved. Example: Her daughter offered the client the last grape. Her daughter says "Thank you, mom" more often. The client feels that the modeling exercise from the course was particularly helpful in this regard. The exercise pointed out that we learn from our parents in nonverbal ways. The client tried modeling manners, and also was careful to show to consideration to her child. Her daughter copied her and showed what she had learned by showing consideration and manners.

Child Mood: The client feels her daughter's moods are hard to figure out, and says that she may need more help in learning sensitivity to her daughter's moods. The client indicated she would like to work at meeting her daughter's emotional needs more completely.

Child Distrac: The client feels her daughter is very active and doesn't pay attention as well as she could.

Mo Depress: The client feels her depression has improved dramatically. She says that a counselor's suggestion was responsible for much of her improvement, however, and that the course was not directly responsible.

Mo Attach: The client says "communication and closeness is better." She feels that communicating her own feelings has helped the closeness between her and her daughter. Learning about owning her own feelings by using "I" statements was particularly helpful. Example: When the client is feeling tired

or unhappy, she explains this to her child and asks her child to choose an activity that will not bother her mother.

Restric Role: The client definitely does not feel as restricted or "tied down" as before the class. She says that "parenting doesn't have to be hard if you understand what's going on." The "Love Bucket" portion of the course was very helpful for her regarding her role. Learning that she should do things for herself and not feel guilty has helped her relax and enjoy her parenting more. She feels able to meet her child's needs, and thus is able to enjoy herself without feeling guilty.

Competency: The client feels that she is now able to handle any parenting situation that comes along. The course--"everything in general"--has helped her be more aware of things and given her a "structure to go by." She feels that parenting is "not as scary."

Soc Isol: The client's isolation has diminished, but she thinks that circumstances have caused it, rather than the course.

Real attitude: The client feels that she is more objective with her child, and that emotions don't control her as often.

Spouse: The client says that she is able to accept her situation (separation and divorce) and live with it, due to a lot of things. The parenting course has helped in that the client has discovered that she must meet her daughter's needs, and that she "can't let the situation bother us if I want her to be happy." Another factor contributing to less stress regarding her spouse is the lawyer who is the intermediary between her and her husband; offering the client more control and less arguments.

The best part of the course:

Learning about the difference between discipline (thinking about the child's needs) and punishment (emphasis on parental needs). The exercises were helpful; the interaction with others was informative and useful. The client liked the brainstorming first, analyzing and summarizing later, as a method to sum up experiences and learn new concepts.

To make the course better: A bigger meeting room would be helpful.

Client 2

Changes due to the course:

The client said she learned other ways to do things and can "see things in a different light." She feels that she understands her child's behaviors more, e.g. temper tantrums and other maturational behaviors. A large change has been her new behavior of interacting with her child rather than just being around him. She plays together more rather than doing chores. The best thing about the course was learning "it's O.K. to do things for yourself." She has done many more things for herself since the course began. Examples: planning field trips with her child, eating out, reading in the middle of the night, having her hair cut, buying and arranging a photo album. She allows herself

to leave the house without having done the chores.

The exercise she liked particularly was "Special Me," an exercise which allows a person to think good things about oneself. She indicated that she learned when growing up that positive comments could "give you a big head." Now she feels that positive comments are very important, and that a person really can't give too many positive comments to another.

Other things she learned from the course include trusting her own judgement more, rather than depending on others' values. She also feels that she has a better perspective on the concepts of child self-esteem and "spoiling." For example, saying "bad boy," is detrimental to self-esteem, and a child is not "spoiled" when natural curiosity causes a mess.

To improve the course:

Make the course longer; add more sessions. Include more specifics on discipline. The client feels that she wanted more.

Other comments:

The client says that she is still resolving a lot, and that it takes time for change. She feels a "positive drift," but "beginnings, rather than actual change."

Client 3

Changes due to the course:

The client says she sees the need to make changes, and that this is more stressful than before. She is trying to "break heavy patterns."

The client says that because of the course, she has gained "the ability to talk to my children realistically about sex in an un-uptight way." She feels that the sexuality session "cleared up a grey area."

Another change produced by the course was a realization of the difference between punishment and discipline. This has been a personal/mental change. The client says she is just beginning to change with her children.

Another change in attitude for the client was a realization that "anger is O.K." and a person doesn't need to feel guilty, but that the expression of anger is significant. The client says that this is a change in attitude that is not yet in practice, but she is trying to initiate change. There has been an increase of stress involved with her dissatisfaction of her current methods of punishment, discipline, anger, etc. and the desire to implement new strategies.

To improve the class:

Add more specifics, examples, role-playing and/or films, especially regarding discipline techniques and problems.

Other comments about the course:

The client thought the handouts and films were valuable. The child development section was somewhat repetitive. She had

known a lot about child development previously, but learned a few new things. She thought the course provided good support for herself as a single parent.

Other comments:
"Things seemed real positive" to the client when she first began the course. Since that time, several stressful situations have occurred during the weeks of the course. The client feels that she is operating under the stress of change and growth. She feels that she needs her own space more, and is "resenting parenting right now." She is also feeling the lack of a relationship with a spouse. She defines her current parenting situation as "some stress, but growing. I feel an emerging feeling of competence."

Client 4

Changes reflected by the PSI:
Child Reinf: The client is more aware of positive responses from her child. She feels that the number of responses may not have changed, but only the client's awareness. She says she "really enjoys being around her."
Real Attit: The client says that she sees her child more as a separate person (than before the course).
Child Accept: The client feels that her acceptance of her child is high and that the PSI scores measuring acceptance were not accurate.
Child Adapt: The client spoke of her child as "strong-willed."
Spouse: The PSI scores accurately reflect the client's estimation. The client was experiencing marital difficulties which increased during the time of the course.
Other scores: generally accurate.

Changes that occurred due to the course:
The client says she listens to her child more, and encourages her child to express her anger. "It's O.K. to be mad."
The client became aware of the importance of modeling during the course. She realized that as a child, she herself was strongly influenced by negative role modeling. She feels that she became aware of the strong influences of her own childhood. By realizing how her parents parented, she can choose to be or not be like them.
The client said she has developed a pattern of remembering course-related things in parenting situations. Example: In the past, in a contest of wills such as fastening an auto seatbelt for her child, the client would have tried for a dominant role and/or hit the child. The course has encouraged the client to try new things: now she tries distraction, bribes, making the child think its her idea (using doll as example) and other methods.
The strongest part of the course was "the idea that being a

good parent means you have to do things for yourself." The client says that doing things for yourself without feeling guilty "definitely helps being a better parent."

The nurturing exercise stands out in her mind: learning that touching as a means of nurturing tends to stop with school-age and up. She felt that the best unit was the Nurturing unit. She also said that the development units were "slow" (repetitive), and that the sexuality film was good.

PSI scores in relation to what she feels she gained:

The client says she takes time to absorb information. She tends to "absorb later rather than in the pressure situation of a class."

Other aspects about the class:

Listening to others talk about different age levels gave persepective.

The client liked the small group (5 to 10) rather than a large group, although she felt that it was unsettling when people dropped out.

The client thought the course was valuable, and has since recommended it to others.

To improve the course:

Some of the opening exercises were too demanding--the transition from the "outside world" to very introspective exercises was sometimes too "harsh." Using them at the end of a session might be more valuable.

Client 5

Comments regarding PSI scores:

The client felt that the scores regarding the child domain were too high. The mother domain, and sit. domain, were more reflective. Upon reviewing test questions, she stated that she felt the "Agree," "Disagree," "Strongly Agree," and "Strongly Disagree" responses were inadequately reflecting her actual stress levels. She chose to mark "Agree" and "Disagree" responses when she felt very comfortable with a response; feeling that the "Strongly" responses sounded defensive. The client says she feels very comfortable with her children's characteristics (child domain).

Child Demand: The client said her child crawls now, which may reflect the change in scores.

Sense Comp: The client says that the course pointed out her inadequacies. Her stress level has raised since she is now aware of parenting aspects she is no longer comfortable with, but has not yet changed.

Real Attit: The client feels that her objectivity has increased.

Spouse: The client feels that her relationship and attitude have not changed since before the course.

Changes due to the course:

The client feels that her attitude toward discipline has changed due to the discipline unit and discussion of the "cycle of anger" in the parenting course. She says she doesn't just accept her previous discipline methods, but, instead of spanking, tries new methods of ignoring, distraction, time-out, and talking to her children about meaning.

The client says that gaining awareness of how she herself was raised makes her aware of how she raises her children. She is considering "less smacking," because "smacking may have caused my own anger and temper."

The client feels more comfortable with her 19-month-old, but that may be due to having more time together.

Before the course, the client used to feel that her children "did things to get me," but doesn't feel that way very often now.

The client feels that she is still changing, particularly in regard to discipline. She recommends the course to others.

Other aspects about the course:

The client particularly liked the discipline and modeling units. She felt that the infancy portion of the development unit was repetitive, since she had known most of the material presented in that section. She liked the movie on sexuality.

The client didn't like the opening exercises, in particular, the "Special Me" exercise. She felt that it asked her to share very private information, and would prefer less threatening exercises.

To improve the course:

Include more specific methods of dealing with specific problems.

Perhaps develop a pre-test to find out what participants know about child development, and then eliminate repetitive portions.

Client 6

Changes since the course:

The client said one of the main changes due to the course was realizing she wasn't alone as a parent; realizing that her problems were "not as drastic as I thought." She said that she had known much of the child development information before the course, but found "talking about little things was valuable." The client felt that she did not change drastically, but that her attitudes were reinforced. Example of a reinforced attitude: A child doesn't learn a lot from strict physical punishment. More learning takes place when working with children rather than against; by talking on their level. The client felt that consistency is very important.

An example of parenting changes since the course: The client feels that she doesn't always blame her son, her oldest child, when a discipline situation arises. She said that she is more likely to ask her son reasons for what happened before

disciplining. She also feels that she is more inclined to direct his energy (suggest things to do) rather than pushing him off or sending him to his room.

About the class:

The client felt that the "weekly boost" of support was the best thing about the class. She felt that being able to talk about her problems helped her to see that her problems weren't so bad. She suggested that mood or tiredness affected her parenting skills, but that after a class meeting, she felt renewed, and handled discipline and other parenting situations the way she wanted to. She also liked the class because it allowed her to be around new people out of her social group, but with similiar problems regarding children.

The client pointed out that her parenting situation has changed in the last few months--her oldest child is attending school, which has given him new interests, new things to share, and a new attitude toward his younger sister. Parenting is much easier right now, said the client.

She said that she was "real glad a class like this is available" and she is "surprised that more people don't take it."

She felt that the child development section was very slow and repetitive, and suggested condensing the sessions. The client liked the small classes. She said that the large group inhibited what she wanted to learn--you could get more done with fewer people--but she appreciated hearing the very different opinions with a larger group.

Regarding the PSI test:

Child domain: The client felt that her perception changed, not her children. She felt that she was more understanding, "not as hard on" her son. "He is a little boy; little boys do this." She realized that his energy level was normal, and became "more comfortable with who he is." This change was due to the course.

Mother domain: The client felt more comfortable with her situation, realizing that she was not alone with parenting concerns. She wants to enjoy them while they're young.

Client 7

Changes due to the course:

Client says that he appreciates children more. He is aware now that children develop just as he is still developing. With what he has learned in the course, he feels now that it is exciting, rather than a burden, to have a child around. Since the course he "reacts" to his child by "interacting." Before the course, he played for short periods with his child. Now he plays because he wants to, feels that he has less inhibitions regarding playing with his child, and even plays with his child in public. The client said that his discipline strategies have also changed since taking the course. He sees alternatives to spanking (he said he hadn't spanked in four months); whereas before the course, "it didn't take much to get to that point."

Specific examples:

Before taking the class, when his child whined, the situation would lead to yelling, resistance, and might end with spanking. Now, the client works at understanding what both he and his child want; he checks to see if a compromise is possible; if no compromise is possible, the client physically picks up his child and makes her do what is necessary.

Comments about the class structure:

The client feels that the development units were a key element in his growth during the course. He also said that the modeling and nurturing units were very valuable. He feels that he is more aware of how he models, both positive and negative modeling. His attitude toward nurturing has also changed: he is free with hugs and kisses; offers safety and security to his child, but wants her to try on her own.

The client "vehemently" recommends the course to others. He said the goal of the course was better understanding of self through the understanding of children, and he felt he accomplished that goal.

To improve the class:

"Start on time," suggested the client. "But it is important not to turn people away." He also suggested spending a lot of time on the development phase; even though others complained, he particularly liked the development sections. The client enjoyed the format of the classes. He remembers informational material rather than the exercises. The client felt that he resisted exercises in order not to think about, or analyze, his own situation.

Comments about test headings (growth):

Child Adapt: The client felt that his perception had changed; not his child.

Child Accept: He feels that his expectations about his child as a person now are more "normal," rather than extreme. Example: good, rather than perfect.

Child Demand: The client said he sees his child now with more realistic eyes, and thus the effect of her demands on him is less.

Child Mood: He feels his child is subject to moods.

Child Distrac: He feels that his perception of his child changed, but suggested that it may have been because his child was maturing, and was able to concentrate more on given activities.

Child Reinf Mo: The client feels that the scores were high because his child was still very young at the time. Today, he said, the scores would be much lower.

Mo Depress: The course definitely helped lower this score.

Mo Attach: The client feels that closeness and communication with his child remains about the same (as before the class). He says he has a hard time communicating with her; "I still don't understand the workings of her mind."

Restric Role: This score has definitely changed as a result of the course. Before the course he felt some resentment that he

couldn't do things when he wanted to. Now he sees that he can get away at times; plus he likes to do things with her more than before.

Sense Comp: This score was also influenced by the course.

Isolation: The course helped in letting him know he needed to get away from parenting at times.

Real Att: The client feels that objectivity is a particular strength of his.

Spouse: He and his spouse were working through some problems during the time the course was in session.

Client 8

The client missed three of the class sessions. She had positive comments about the class, but felt that she had not received enough material to make a significant change. She could think of no specific behavior changes that had occurred since the course. However, she did feel that her attitude had changed, even from the sessions she attended. The client said she felt more capable, and less restricted. She felt able to relax more with her baby. The development sections had reinforced earlier readings that she had done; and she passed on this knowledge to her friends. She would like to retake the course at a later date.

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